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DE RUEHRB #0214 0770937
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 180937Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY RABAT
TO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9803
INFO RHEHNSC/NCS WASHDC
RUEATRS/TREASURY DEPT WASHDC
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1630
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 3197
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1124
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA 4536

UNCLAS RABAT 000214

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SUBJECT: 2008 WESTERN SAHARA UPDATE OF THE WORST
FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

REF: A. STATE 21472
B: CASABLANCA 12
C: RABAT 172

¶1. This message provides requested updates for the Department of Labor's annual report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor in the Western Sahara. (Ref A) The sovereignty of the Western Sahara is disputed between the Government of Morocco and the Polisario, an Algerian-backed organization seeking independence. The GOM maintains control over a significant portion of the Western Sahara from the coastal areas inward. The GOM considers the Western Sahara to be an integral part of its national territory and applies the same laws and administrative procedures that exist in the rest of the country. Post has submitted a report detailing the overall situation of forced labor and child labor in Morocco (Ref B).

¶2. Economic activity in the Western Sahara is limited to phosphate mining, pastoral nomadism, and fishing. There is very limited industrial activity. Embassies visit the region frequently and Post is not aware of any significant instances of forced labor or child labor in the Western Sahara. Traditional Sahrawi practices of domestic slavery were eliminated many years ago. The only reports we have heard of about slavery stem from allegations that the practice continues in Polisario-controlled refugee camps. Child and labor issues are also addressed in the Western Sahara Chapter of the annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (Ref C).

¶3. This message was prepared by Consulate Casablanca Laboff Matthew Lehrfeld, and represents coordinated Mission views. Further inquiries should be directed to Consulate Casablanca, info Rabat.

JACKSON